The Captain's Ward

A Drama in Four Acts

By Graham Ashmead

JOHN SPENCER,
PRINTER AND BOOKBINDER,
CHESTER, PA.

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BY

GRAHAM ASHMEAD

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Dramatis Personæ.

Bessie Harrington,	*Captain Graham's Ward.*
Ada Murray,	*A lady with a fortune.*
Hannah Pennington,	*Graham's Spinster Aunt.*
Captain Paul Graham,	*Guardian for Bessie.*
James Brownley,	*Graham's Private Secretary.*
Thomas Singleton,	*Clerk in Graham & Co.'s Banking House.*
Doctor Wright,	*Surgeon U. S. Army.*
Sergeant Gray,	*Of the Ninth U. S. Infantry.*
James,	*Butler at Graham's House.*
Filipino Assassin.	
Filipino Servant.	

The Captain's Ward.

ACT I.

[SCENE.—*Room of Paul Graham, U. S. A., luxuriously furnished. Door at back and at right, which, with the windows, are handsomely draped. Fire in grate. James Brownley and Thomas Singleton discovered.*]

BROWNLEY. Tom, the young Lieutenant is going it at a hand canter. He's in for a good time and lots of fun.

SINGLETON. If I had had a grandfather drop off leaving me four millions well invested, I'd go in for a good time, too. But say, I never heard that Paul was "sucking the monkey," as the sailors say.

BROWNLEY. If you mean boozing, the Lieutenant has no inclination that way. He's quick enough to take a hand in any sport and pastime, but he detests drunkenness and gambling. He is an honorable, manly, straightforward young fellow. You see his mother lived until he was almost sixteen. He idolized her. Her teachings had much to do in forming his moral character.

SINGLETON. Then he is not throwing his money recklessly away. Is he inclined to yield to designing women's fascinations?

BROWNLEY. I think not. He is liberal with his money. He seems to have no particular fancy for any lady of his acquaintance. No, his expenditures are well within his income.

SINGLETON. Is he forming questionable associations? You would best know that. In the bank, we hear very little about him, excepting his account there.

BROWNLEY. No. He is a good-intentioned chap, and considering the temptations that assail a young man of great wealth, his life is exceedingly clean. The only thing that alarms me is his heedlessness in assuming responsibilities.

SINGLETON. I do not fully comprehend you.

BROWNLEY. Why, he is now only a boy of twenty-four. During the Spanish war, you remember, he met a Captain in the Volunteer U. S. Cavalry—the Rough Riders—who was wounded in the assault on San Juan hill, and died shortly after the surrender of Santiago. The Lieutenant was then a Captain in the 71st New York, and when the Rough Rider Captain died, he made Captain Paul the guardian of his little daughter. The boy accepted the trust. He has never seen the child. She is at school at Hartford. The estate is worth about 80,000 dollars. Paul advances all the money that she may ask, through the principal of the school, for the maintenance and education of the girl. Sometimes the requests are for large sums, far beyond what, I think, is needed under the circumstances.

SINGLETON. Do you think there is a leak at the other end?

BROWNLEY. I am inclined to think so. After the war, Paul, who is infatuated with the life of a soldier, sought and secured a first lieutenancy in the regular army. That, in a measure, has prevented him from making a visit to his ward, as he should have done. Children feel slights as keenly as adults.

SINGLETON. I did hear something of his accepting the guardianship of a small girl, but learned little beyond that fact. As I said, we seldom hear of the Lieutenant's personal affairs in the office. You, who are his private secretary, necessarily know much more than any of us, who are employed at the banking house.

BROWNLEY. I am not disclosing any of his personal affairs in what I have said. I merely suggested that a wealthy young man, an army officer at that, might possibly later find it burdensome and costly to accept the guardianship of a child, of whom he knows nothing, and who is wholly without known relatives.

PAUL GRAHAM. (*Speaking to persons without.*) I will be with you gentlemen, presently. (*Enters.*) Oh, Singleton, you are here. Is there anything respecting which you must see me on business of the bank?

SINGLETON. Nothing of importance. A telegram was received there for you just before closing, which should have been sent here. I was through work, and was going out on my bike, so I offered to bring it to you. Here it is. (*Hands telegram.*)

PAUL. Thanks. Brownley, I was talking of my ward to several ladies to-day, and when I told them I had never seen her, they declared I was remiss in my duty—that the little girl might feel that I had neglected her. I never thought of that. One of the ladies, as a peace offering, bought for me a half dozen pretty dolls and an assortment of toys. As I am on waiting orders now, I propose to run over to Hartford to-morrow and make her little ladyship's acquaintance. Make no engagements for me for several days. (*Opens telegram.*) By George, here's a go! This is a message from Madame Delaplaine, stating that Bessie has left the school and her present whereabouts are unknown. Can you suggest anything I should do under these circumstances?

BROWNLEY. If you can avoid your engagement with the gentlemen who await you in the library, I would see Mr. Drake at once, and ask his opinion. He is a warm friend of yours as well as your legal adviser.

PAUL. That's a capital suggestion. I will act on it at once. (*Looks at watch.*) Our telephone is out of order. I noticed that a moment ago. Singleton, you have your wheel—will you oblige me by taking a spin to Drake's office and asking him to remain until I call there?

SINGLETON. Gladly, sir. I will go at once. (Exit.)

PAUL. This matter rather interferes with my plans. The child cannot have run far afield. The anger of a mere tot like Bessie is will soon expend itself, and she will be only too glad to return home. The telegram states that if any news of the girl is received it will be promptly wired. I will hurry down to Drake's office and be back presently. (*Exit.*)

BROWNLEY. This may be more serious than it at first appears. The little girl has a snug fortune of 80,000 dollars in her own right. (*Looks out of window.*) The Lieutenant is off. At all events, it may teach him a lesson, which may be fortunate in that it comes through a child rather than through a girl of more mature years. Possibly the

little one is safe at school by this time, although it might be that she has been kidnapped to exact a large ransom. (*Enter butler.*)

BUTLER. There is a young lady downstairs to see the Master. She would not give her name, but said she would— (*Enter Bessie Harrington.*)

BESSIE. Wait the return of her guardian. (*To Brownley*) Are you Lieutenant Graham, my guardian?

BROWNLEY. No, I am his private secretary. You are—

BESSIE. Bessie Harrington, Mr. Graham's ward. I have made no mistake, I trust—Lieutenant Graham lives here?

BROWNLEY. Yes. (*To butler.*) James, when the Lieutenant returns tell him a lady is waiting to see him in his den. You need not mention her name. (*Exit butler.*)

BESSIE. Oh, dear, how dreadfully unfortunate it is that he is absent. I suppose I can remain in this apartment until his return? I sent away the carriage and my trunk will be here presently. Please pay the express charge. After I paid the hackman, I lost my pocketbook. It must have fallen into the street, for I looked for it everywhere in the hack without success. The loss is not much. I had only four dollars and some change in the pocketbook.

BROWNLEY. I will see to the trunk. You would know the Lieutenant if you saw him?

BESSIE. No. I suppose he is a middle aged gentleman. The guardians for the girls at our school were middle aged or old men. All guardians are that, I believe?

BROWNLEY. Not always.

BESSIE. I do wish he were here now, although I dread to see him. I could not stay at Madame Delaplaine's any longer. I bribed one of the maids, who had a young man waiting on her, to get my trunk out of the house and express it here. Then I ran away this morning. I haven't had a bite to eat since breakfast, and I was then so excited that I had no appetite. I am faint for lack of food.

BROWNLEY. I can promptly remedy that. I will have luncheon sent to you immediately. In the meanwhile, make yourself perfectly at home. Your guardian will be here presently. (*Exit.*)

BESSIE. (*Removing her wraps and hat.*) Well, I'm here, and as tired as I can well be. Hungry! I think I never was so near starvation in all my life. (*Yawns.*) When a little tot, I remember I once told poor Dad that I was tired, hungry, and sleepy, the three "worstest" things in the world. How dear Dad laughed. (*Draws lounging chair in front of fireplace and seats herself.*) Poor Daddy. I have never missed you so much as I do to-day. I don't know my guardian from Adam. Why, I didn't know Adam. I suppose he is a grumpy, disagreeable old man, and being an army officer, doubtless something of a martinet, who will direct all my actions by some miserable old code of military tactics. But I will never go back to school. If he makes my life unbearable, I'll drown myself. (*Enter butler with luncheon.*) Place the little table beside me. I'll eat luncheon here. Has Mr. Graham returned?

BUTLER. No, Miss.

BESSIE. I'm his ward, Miss Bessie Harrington. I have never seen him. Tell me something about him.

BUTLER. Mr. Graham is a fine gentleman.

BESSIE. Has he any daughters about my age?

BUTLER. Well, I don't know, Miss. I think not. Lieutenant Graham is not married.

BESSIE. An old bachelor, then?

BUTLER. I suppose so, Miss.

BESSIE. I am glad you said that he was a fine gentleman. He has tasteful and sumptuous surroundings.

BUTLER. Yes, Miss.

BESSIE. While I am eating, tell me something about him, without my questioning you as a lawyer does a witness.

BUTLER. I don't know what to tell you, Miss. He has his horses, his country seat, his yacht, but since he entered the regular army, he has offered the "Sylph" for sale. He has everything that will make a single gentleman comfortable.

BESSIE. Is he a woman hater?

BUTLER. I don't know, Miss. I don't know what a woman hater is. I know that Lieutenant Paul Graham is a gentleman that everybody likes.

BESSIE. Does he growl and swear when things don't go just as he wants them to?

BUTLER. No, Miss. He is easy enough to get along with.

BESSIE. Well, that is good news, at all events. I will not detain you longer. Please tell Mr. Graham that I am here as soon as he returns.

BUTLER. Yes, Miss. (*Goes up stage.*) I haven't been put through such a cross-examination since—oh, I can't remember how long ago. (*Exit.*)

BESSIE. (*Struggling herself in chair, and putting her crossed feet on fender.*) Oh, I just feel too sleepy for anything. I'll sit here before this fire for a little while, and—take—things—comfortable. My eyelids—are too heavy—for—(*falls asleep.*) (*Enter Graham at right door.*)

PAUL. Doubtless Drake is a sound lawyer, but it seems to me he took about twenty minutes to advise me to do nothing, to let things drift, as it were. He will charge for his opinion, but I'll be d—d if I'll follow his suggestions. Something must be done—(*Sees Bessie's hat.*) Well, I'd just give five dollars to see Aunt Hannah in that rig. An old woman of nearly sixty in an outfit like that would be a perfect guy. But Aunt Hannah is a good, sweet old lady. She thinks there never was my like born. She pets me as if I were still a child. I shall never grow to full manhood in her eyes. (*Whistles.*) There is someone in that chair. (*Goes to center door and beckons. Enter butler.*) Whose things are these? (*Points to Bessie's hat and wraps.*)

BUTLER. The young lady's, sir. The young lady in the chair before the grate.

PAUL. The what? What do you mean? A young lady in my den? What are you talking about? What young lady?

BUTLER. The young lady over there, sir. She said her name was Miss Bessie—Miss Bessie—I forget the rest of the name, but she is your ward.

PAUL. You don't say that? My ward is a little girl, who, I fancy, wears her hair in a pigtail and is clothed in very abbreviated dresses. Why, I've half dozen dolls and a lot of toys in the house now, bundled up to take to her to-morrow. You haven't been drinking, James?

BUTLER. No, sir. I have only told you what she said. The young lady in the chair declared she was tired, hungry and sleepy. I served her luncheon, but she's gone to sleep, I think, without any assistance.

PAUL. How do you know she is asleep?

BUTLER. If she wasn't asleep, you'd know, sir. She asked me more questions in five minutes than any attorney could ask in a quarter of an hour.

PAUL. James, order the carriage to the stable. I'll not start for Hartford just yet, as I had designed to do. (*Exit butler.*) If it is that girl, I'll give her a piece of my mind. This must be one of her schoolmates, much older than Bessie, who has come to tell me news of her. I wonder how she got in my den? (*Walks on tip toes around in front of Bessie.*) By George! She's a pretty minx, anyway. There is surely some mistake. This sleeping beauty in the chair is eighteen. Captain Harrington always spoke of his daughter as his little girl—as a mere child. (*Bessie stirs.*) Good gracious! Why—(*Bessie opens her eyes, looks at Graham, and sits up.*)

BESSIE. Where am—oh, I know where I am. I suppose I must introduce myself. I am Miss Bessie Harrington. I came to see my guardian on important business. I'm Lieutenant Paul Graham's ward. (*About to rise.*)

PAUL. Please remain seated. You are sure you have not made a mistake?

BESSIE. What mistake could I make? Isn't this Mr. Graham's house?

PAUL. Yes, it's his house all right. But I never heard that Captain Harrington had two daughters—both named Bessie.

BESSIE. He never had but one daughter—but one child. I don't know what you mean?

PAUL. Mr. Graham is the guardian of a Bessie Harrington. Her father always spoke of her as a little girl. You are not that Bessie Harrington?

BESSIE. (*Rising.*) I am the daughter and only child of Captain Edward Harrington, of the Rough Riders, who was wounded in the storming of San Juan hill, and who died of his injuries at Santiago. His will made Captain Paul Graham, of the 71st New York Infantry, my guardian. Captain Graham has since been appointed a first lieutenant in the regular army. That is the whole story. Do you live here? Do you know Mr. Graham?

PAUL. Yes, I live here. I know Graham. I guess better than anyone else.

BESSIE. Then tell me something about him. Is he a cross, crabbed old fellow? I remember one of our girls at school had a guardian like that. I told her she ought to poison him. Sometimes I think Daddy couldn't have been altogether in his right mind when he made his will, leaving me in the charge of an old man who hasn't thought enough of the trust he accepted to come and see what manner of girl it was his dead friend had confided to his supervision.

PAUL. Graham didn't intentionally neglect the duty he had accepted. He could not have refused the request. Captain Harrington had been kind to him, and it would have been ungenerous to have denied the wish of his dying friend, don't you know.

BESSIE. I know if I were a man, and a dying friend had placed his only daughter in my charge, I would have learned something of the girl, particularly if she were alone in the world, with no one to appeal to save a guardian who seemed to have been wholly indifferent, who did not make the least effort to know whether she was happy or miserable.

PAUL. Don't you understand that Graham had no thought that his ward was anything but a small child, who would be most happy under the control of the school authorities where her father had placed her?

BESSIE. I don't understand it that way. Had a woman been my guardian, she would long ago have learned whether I was a baby in

long dresses, a girl in short skirts, or a young lady of eighteen. I am eighteen.

PAUL. But I don't know anything of woman's ways.

BESSIE. I did not say you did. You are not my guardian. You are not more than three or four years older than I am. Maybe you have a guardian?

PAUL. Possibly I need one. I had a guardian once, but he never bothered about me. The most I know of him is that he drew with punctuality the commissions allowed him for the management of my estate.

BESSIE. You make your home here, I presume? I don't mind telling you that I think we will be excellent friends. I shall insist upon living here with my guardian.

PAUL. Won't that be jolly. (*Hesitates.*) But Graham isn't married, and would it be altogether proper?

BESSIE. Certainly. Several of our girls live with their guardians, and one, I know, is an old bachelor.

PAUL. Just suppose that I were your guardian.

BESSIE. (*Laughing.*) Why that would be too ridiculous. I will wager you a box of bon-bons that you are not more than six years older than I am.

PAUL. (*With dignity.*) Let it be ridiculous, but all the same I am Paul Graham, guardian of Bessie Harrington, daughter of Captain Edward Harrington, deceased.

BESSIE. (*Anxiously.*) Tell me true! Don't jest with me about this. It can be no jest with me. I have been very unhappy. I could not stay an hour longer at Madame Delaplaine's. I haven't anywhere to go save my guardian's home. I came here believing that he would receive me and protect me as he must have promised my dear Dad he would. Tell me true! You are not my guardian! You are so young a man.

PAUL. Nevertheless, Miss Harrington, I am Paul Graham, and you, it seems, are my ward. I thought until now that you were a child of not more than eight or ten years at the most. (*Rings bell.*) James, fetch me immediately the bundle you will find on the window seat in the library. (*Exit butler.*) I know now that I have been remiss in my duty, but I want you to believe that I am telling you only the truth when I say that I expected to find in my ward a little girl. (*Enter butler, and lays package on table.*)

BUTLER. That is what you wished, sir?

PAUL. Yes. I have no further orders, James. (*Exit butler.*) This, I think, Miss Harrington, (*undoing package*) will prove that I believed you to be a mere child. (*Picks up dolls and spreads out toys.*)

BESSIE. You were going to bring me those dolls? (*Laughing.*) It is too funny. I'm going to accept one of the dolls, but the remainder and the toys must find a more juvenile owner. You called me Miss Harrington just now. I'm going to be the best of friends with my guardian. Call me Bessie, as you did in your letters to Madame.

PAUL. Then you must call me Paul.

BESSIE. But would that be proper? You, my guardian—why that would be too familiar. But (*anxiously*) you won't send me away? You can surely arrange it so that I can live here? I'll make myself useful and won't be in your way the least bit. Daddy trusted you, and he expected that I should trust you also. I can never remember living anywhere save in a boarding house, hotels, in the summer season at the seaside, in the mountains, or at school. I am heart weary of it all. I thought my guardian would let me live with him. Of course, I

never imagined he would be a young man, only a little older than his ward.

PAUL. Listen to me a moment. I am an orphan. Eight years ago my father and mother were killed in a frightful collision on a railway. Since then Aunt Hannah, my mother's eldest sister, much older than mother, has been the head of this house. You see, I am a young man, much as that fact may alarm you, and I do not know whether that, in itself, will interfere with your plans.

BESSIE. No. I am your ward, and the law, for I had an old attorney to give me an opinion, contemplates that you shall take the place of my father until I am of age. A ward, he told me, can live with her guardian with the like propriety that a daughter can live with her father.

PAUL. If you can remain here, Bessie—it is a guardian's privilege to call his ward by her first name—without in anywise compromising your reputation, I want you to stay and make this house your home.

BESSIE. I'll obey your orders, sir. You don't know how lonely my life has been.

PAUL. Bessie, already you have brought sunshine into this gloomy old dwelling. As your guardian, I think I can, with all propriety, say that you will remain here, and that I am exceedingly glad you have come.

BESSIE. I told you we would be the best of friends. I'll promise to obey you in everything—that is everything that I want to obey you in. There are some things, you know, that I know better about than you possibly could know. Now, in those things you wouldn't expect me to obey you?

PAUL. Bessie, I am not hard to get along with. I believe, with you, that we will be most excellent friends. (*Rings bell.*) I must ask Aunt Hannah to take part in our conference. (*Enters butler.*) My compliment to Miss Pennington, and I request her presence here. (*Exit butler.*)

BESSIE. You won't let her send me away? I am so utterly alone that I often think it would be a mercy to me if I could die.

PAUL. Believe me, I did not imagine that you were so unhappy. I condemn myself for my thoughtlessness. It was not the deliberate neglect of a positive duty. I want you to believe that it all came about because of my misapprehension as to your age.

BESSIE. It is only recently that I grew discontented. The Christmas holidays are at hand, to which all the other girls are looking forward as a season that will call them home. I dreaded to be alone at school. The Madame's nephew, a young man whom I just abominate, since last summer has forced his attentions upon me. It is only during vacations that he is an inmate of the house. You do not know how it annoyed me, so I ran away this morning. I could not stay any longer, I will never go back there again, where I cannot avoid that man. Rather than that, I will drown myself.

PAUL. You shall not return to be annoyed. (*Enter Miss Pennington.*) Aunt Hannah, this is Miss Bessie Harrington, my ward.

MISS HANNAH. Why, Paul, you told me your ward was a little girl. My dear, you are a grown woman. (*Takes Bessie's hand.*)

PAUL. Yes. But I did not know that until to-day. Aunt, Bessie is very unhappy at school. She desires to make her home with us. I am her guardian, and—

MISS HANNAH. A girl ward and a boy guardian. I don't—

BESSIE. You won't turn me away? Say you won't? Don't let my guardian send me back to that school.

MISS HANNAH. Sit down, and let us talk this matter over quietly. (*All are seated.*) I am Paul Graham's aunt, and the head of this household until my nephew shall marry. That I think eliminates the question of propriety wholly from consideration. My dear, I am often lonely. I have sometimes thought that if I had a nice pleasant young lady to be with me, who will be tender to my failings, who will help me from growing old by keeping me alive to and interested in the happenings of the hour, I would be the better for such association. Paul is devoted to me, but he is a man, who must fill a man's place in the busy world. I shall be glad if you will stay with me. Paul, your ward must come to this house at my solicitation.

PAUL. Aunt Hannah, I knew you could find a way. Bessie, Aunt Hannah is the dearest and best Aunt that anyone could imagine. Now, as it is all settled, you will have to find some children to give these dolls and toys to.

BESSIE. Oh, I propose to select one dolly that I shall keep in remembrance of this day.

MISS HANNAH. Come with me, Bessie. I will show you the apartments that will be set apart for your personal use.

(*Brownley enters hurriedly.*)

PAUL. You evidently have important news of some kind. What is it?

BROWNLEY. It may be nothing very material, but the postman has just left this letter. It is from the War Department.

PAUL. (*Opening letter.*) I am assigned to the 9th Infantry, and ordered to join the regiment in the Philippines. I must report at San Francisco in time to embark on the transport leaving that port on January 20th. Well, at all events, that will give me the holidays at home.

MISS HANNAH. Oh, Paul, my boy, I am so sorry. What will I do without you?

PAUL. Aunty, you knew that this must happen, and you should have prepared yourself. Fortunately, Bessie has come to comfort you during my absence. My little girl (*to Bessie*) I seem to fall into your father's term of address—I have not been an attentive guardian to you. I want you to forgive my shortcomings, and I rely upon you to break the severity of the blow to my aunt.

BESSIE. (*Slipping between Miss Pennington and Paul, and giving a hand to each.*) To you, Aunt, I promise the love of a devoted daughter, and to you, my guardian, I shall ever be a steadfast friend. (*Curtain falls.*)

ACT II.

[*Interval of one year. Same scene as in first act. Brownley checking accounts at table. Curious arms displayed on side table.*]

BROWNLEY. A most gratifying report to forward to Captain Graham. The balance in the bank is unusually large. Mr. Drake should seek profitable investments for much of this idle capital. I must call his attention to that. Miss Harrington's estate is secured beyond the liklihood of loss, but that account is misleading. The principal and income are duly set forth, but for more than two years no charge is made for her maintenance in anywise; nor have the commissions of her guardian been credited. That is unbusinesslike and a mistake, I think, when dealing with a woman's estate. I have written Captain Graham several times, asking instructions as to that account, but he never alludes to the matter in any of his letters.

(*Enter Miss Pennington.*)

MISS HANNAH. Mr. Brownley, you are busy at your annual statement? That reminds me that it is nearly thirteen months since Paul left us.

BROWNLEY. Yes, time slips by rapidly.

MISS HANNAH. In this case, I am not so sure of that. Circumstances have much to do with the measurement of time's flight. I am not reconciled to Paul's absence even now. I miss my boy to-day as much as I missed him the hour he left us.

BROWNLEY. I am sure you do.

MISS HANNAH. If it were not for Miss Bessie, I do not know how I could endure the separation. What a happy chance it was that made her an inmate of this dwelling. Mr. Brownley, in Captain Graham's absence, I, of course, must turn to you for advice. Not on business matters, but in things appertaining to the household affairs of the family.

BROWNLEY. I am always at your service. You know Captain Graham makes ample provision for the maintenance of the house, indeed, you have hardly expended the half of the sum set apart for that purpose.

MISS HANNAH. It is not a question of money that I have now in contemplation. It rather relates to Miss Harrington. I often wonder whether she is dissatisfied or whether she is gradually failing in health. I notice that she frequently sighs deeply and appears self-absorbed.

BROWNLEY. You have consulted a physician?

MISS HANNAH. No. I sugggested it to Bessie, but she would not consent, declaring that there was nothing the matter with her.

BROWNLEY. Possibly she is interested in some gentleman of her acquaintance (*laughs*). You have mentioned, Miss Pennington, some of the symptoms of that disorder, irrespective of sex, sighing like a furance, and the like.

MISS HANNAH. No, I think not. She is peculiarly indifferent to society's demands, and apparently is not attracted to any gentleman particularly. Bessie is a charming, warm-hearted, and affectionate girl, but in some respects she approaches eccentricity in her ways. I believe if she had been a boy she would have sought a cadetship at West Point. She enjoys many of the popular novels of the hour, but she studies diligently the map of the Philippine Islands, is familiar with the movement of troops there, scans the daily papers for news from Manila, and reads carefully the Army and Navy Journal. Not an item in that publication escapes her attention.

BROWNLEY. I know Miss Pennington that she esteems Captain Graham highly. May it not be possible that she entertains for him feelings that may exceed respect?

MISS HANNAH. I am surprised at your suggestion, Mr. Brownley. Why he's her guardian. That relationship should preclude absolutely such a thought.

BROWNLEY. But Captain Graham is a young man. A guardianship is a fictitious legal relationship that expires at an early age, and is limited in duration. I do not know that I ever heard of a ward falling in love with her guardian, but it is not an impossible nor improbable incident, under certain conditions.

MISS HANNAH. Really, Mr. Brownley, the whole thing is so absurd that I am astounded that a man of such clear judgment and business forethought as you are credited with, could entertain that thought for an instant. Besides, I have set my heart upon Captain Graham's marriage to Miss Ada Murray. I may ask your assistance in accomplishing that purpose?

BROWNLEY. Then you would object to Miss Bessie Harrington as a wife for your nephew?

MISS HANNAH. No, I would not. I love Bessie as though she were my own daughter. But I know neither Paul or Bessie entertain, even remotely, such sentiment towards the other.

BROWNLEY. Let us then eliminate the thought from further consideration. I shall, without Miss Bessie suspecting it, endeavor to learn what is wrong with her.

MISS HANNAH. I trust you will. I am glad this conversation has taken place. I shall be busy for some time, and I am expecting Miss Murray this morning. She promised to run over and inspect the collection of arms Captain Graham sent from the Philippines. Let me be told when she comes. (*Exit.*)

BROWNLEY. I will do anything within reason for the good of Paul Graham, but I'll be damned if, under any circumstances, I shall aid him to win Ada Murray's love. (*Enter Ada Murray at back.*) I love Ada Murray with all my heart, but I dare not—

ADA. (*Advancing.*) Pray finish your sentence, Mr. Brownley. I am sure I heard you speak my name as I entered this room. Talking to one's self is not a very encourageing sign as to one's mental condition. I once heard an eminent physician make that assertion.

BROWNLEY. I don't know what I said or intended to say. The fact is, Miss Murray, I know so little of what is going on about me that my mental balance may well be questioned.

ADA. Well, you look as if you have had some surprising information communicated to you recently.

BROWNLEY. I have. It was not communicated to me as a secret. I don't think it was, and I do not consider I am violating anyone's confidence when I tell you that Miss Pennington a moment ago said her dearest wish was that Captain Paul Graham and you should become man and wife.

ADA. (*Sprightly.*) Isn't that grand? It is not everybody who can have a marriage arranged for them by other people. That is not usual in this country, is it?

BROWNLEY. (*Angerily.*) I don't know whether it is usual or not, but I do know that I will not assist in bringing that marriage about.

ADA. Why not? Captain Graham and I—the high contracting parties, that's a newspaper way of describing the victims at a wedding—, are certainly suitable as to age, family, social position, and fortune. Of course, I do not compare favorably in the last essential with Captain Graham, but I have half a million in my own right. That is not so bad, is it?

BROWNLEY. I know you are rich in your own right.

ADA. But I asked you, Mr. Brownley, why you will not assist in this proposed marriage negotiations, and you have not answered the question?

BROWNLEY. I don't know, but I won't.

ADA. Now you are getting angry. Don't you think I would make some good man a good wife?

BROWNLEY. Yes, I think you would. He will be a fortunate man who wins you.

ADA. That's better. I suppose you have noticed that I am very fond of Captain Graham?

BROWNLEY. I cannot say I have. I know you admire him as a friend, but I had no thought that it went beyond that, Miss Murray.

ADA. It seems to me that when I entered this apartment—Captain Graham's den—I heard you—there was surely no other person here

when I came in—talking to yourself about Ada Murray. You did not give that young lady the formal title of Miss Murray, as you have done during the last five minutes, a half dozen times.

BROWNLEY. But I did not know that you heard me.

ADA. For shame, Mr. Brownley. I did not suppose that you would speak of me in my absence with less respect than when I am present.

BROWNLEY. I was—I was—the fact is I was annoyed a trifle at something Miss Pennington had said to me.

ADA. Was it that she desired Captain Graham to marry me?

BROWNLEY. Yes.

ADA. You won't get angry again if I ask you to aid me in escaping that fate? Would you aid me?

BROWNLEY. I will do all that you ask me, for I know you will not require anything that would be in anywise dishonorable.

ADA. I thank you for your good opinion, James (*watches him*), I mean Mr. Brownley.

BROWNLEY. Why did you call me James? Tell me, Miss Murray.

ADA. I don't know. Probably because you called me Ada, when you thought I was not present. "Evil communications," St. Paul says, generally have injurious consequences attending them.

BROWNLEY. You are pleased to ridicule me.

ADA. I do not ridicule you. There is no man whom I more esteem, or whose opinion I hold in higher regard. (*Gives him both her hands.*) You will forgive me if I have said anything to wound you, Mr. Brownley?

BROWNLEY. Miss Murray, I—I—

ADA. Tell me what you intended to say. You are not afraid of me? (*Takes her hands away.*)

BROWNLEY. I have no right to say—to tell you—what I was about to say. But when Miss Pennington requested me to aid her in bringing about your marriage to Paul Graham, I could no longer conceal from myself the truth—that I love you devotedly, and—and—

ADA. Well, what then? Tell me.

BROWNLEY. You are not angry with me for what I have said? Does that mean that there is hope for me?

ADA. Jimmy—you see with what familiarity I can address you—don't you remember the evening about a year ago—it was during the holidays—I was on my way home, when a brawny, rough man, somewhat intoxicated, grossly insulted me at the corner of the street just below here, and you came promptly to my assistance. I was awfully frightened then, Jimmy. You never mentioned the incident since that time. You remember that Bessie introduced us to each other the next day, in this house. You never, in anywise, suggested to me that I was under the least obligation to you for the protection you then rendered me. You were badly hurt, for a ring on his finger had laid your cheek open. Jimmy, I have been thinking that I ought to give you something in recognition of that kind act in my behalf.

BROWNLEY. I will not permit you to give me anything for that service. I can, at least, cherish the recollection of that incident, which I could not do if I were paid for it as a matter of barter and sale.

ADA. Not a matter of barter and sale, Jimmy. But I want to give you something that you will cherish. I thought maybe you'd—you'd let me give you—

BROWNLEY. I cannot accept anything, Miss Murray. That would be an insult to my manhood.

ADA. No, it would not. I am sorry, but I thought that as you had protected me so bravely—and I am such a coward—that possibly

you would consent to protect me always, that is if I gave (*holding out her hands*) myself to you.

BROWNLEY. You don't mean that, Ada? You don't mean that you love me and will be my wife?

ADA. Yes, but you won't let me. I thought you might be willing to accept my gift, for I do love you and would be your wife; that is if you want me. (*He kisses her.*) Don't you love me, Jimmy?

BROWNLEY. You know I love you, Ada. If ever a man loved a woman with all his heart, I so love you, my darling. But I lacked the courage to tell you so.

ADA. No, that is hardly the fact. If I had been a girl wholly without fortune, you would have told me of your love long ago. It was my half million of dollars that stood in the way and kept you silent. You don't think me a forward, unwomanly woman for what I have said? Say you don't? I could not let my life be blighted because my fortune held you in awe.

BROWNLEY. Ada, I hold you the sweetest woman that ever made a man happy in giving herself to him.

ADA. That's just it, Jimmy. I gave myself to you. You said you did not want me. You never asked me to be your wife. You never would have asked me. When I overheard you talking to yourself, as I came into the room, I determined to set everything right, if I could. Wasn't it just horrid in me?

BROWNLEY. I loved you passionately from the night we were thrown together by that ruffian's act. But, Ada, I was afraid to tell you of that love.

ADA. It was all owing to that horrid money. Why, if you had half a million dollars and I were a poor girl, do you think I would let that stand in the way of our marriage? Then why should you let it separate us? You naughty boy, you made me do the proposing, and when I was trying to give you all sorts of "tips"—that's a word they use on the street, isn't it? (*Brownley nods*)—you were just as blind as a three days' old puppy. You couldn't or you wouldn't help me a bit.

BROWNLEY. My darling, (*embracing her*) in my great joy, I have wholly forgotten to tell you that Miss Pennington requested to be notified as soon as you came. I never thought of what she said until now.

ADA. And I am so glad you did not remember her request until now. I must glance at those arms Captain Graham has sent, for Miss Pennington will be certain to ask me my opinion of the collection. I shall tell her I have been looking at them, but I shall make no allusion to certain passages at arms which have taken place in this room this morning. (*Ada and Brownley walk to table. Bessie enters at rear door.*) Now you can promise (*making a motion over her left shoulder*) Miss Pennington your aid in bringing about a marriage between Captain Graham and Ada Murray. You can do that since I have confided to you the truth, and you know how much I love Paul Graham. (*Bessie places hand on heart, then advances slowly to front.*)

BESSIE. Pardon me, Ada. Aunt Hannah has asked several times if you had come. (*Staggers to chair.*) Mr. Brownley, a glass of water—I am faint. (*Brownley gives her water. Bessie drinks.*) Don't stay, Ada. I am all right now. You will promise me that no mention shall be made of this? Mr. Brownley will consider the same request applies to him.

ADA. Neither Mr. Brownley nor myself will mention this incident. I thought you knew us better than that.

BESSIE. I do not doubt you, Ada. What I said was merely pre-

cautionary. Mr. Brownley, I desire information respecting a matter of personal business concern. (*Rises.*) I shall return presently. (*Exit.*)

BROWNLEY. Do you know, Ada, whether there is any gentleman with whom Miss Harrington is particularly pleased?

ADA. You imagine that she is in love? I think not. I am nearer to her, Jimmy, than any of her associates, and I would have discovered her secret, had she had one, ere this. (*Gives him her hand.*) I must run away now to Miss Pennington. I don't know how many or what fibs I will have to tell her to account for my delay. I am going, sir—I said, I am going.

BROWNLEY. But not in that formal way? May I—

ADA. Well, yes, you may. (*Kisses her.*) Good-bye. Will I always have to be the forward one? (*Runs to door, shakes her hand at him, goes out, and returns.*) Jimmy, am I not just horrid? (*Exit.*)

BROWNLEY. You have made me the happiest of men. Ada was right. Her money would have forever kept my lips sealed, but now I am free to tell of my love for her. She, however, must decide when the world shall know of our engagement. (*Enter Bessie.*)

BESSIE. Mr. Brownley, I am utterly ignorant of business affairs. I am anxious to learn how much of my allowance is unexpended.

BROWNLEY. A trifle over five thousand dollars, I think, exclusive of a check for one thousand, which Captain Graham sent you as a birthday gift. You have not cashed that yet.

BESSIE. I shall not cash it. Could I draw the balance in bank to-morrow?

BROWNLEY. It is yours to use when and how you choose.

BESSIE. I will be pleased if you bring it to me to-morrow. Large notes would be preferable. I will send you a blank signed check for you to fill in the amount. I trust you will say nothing of this to any-one?

BROWNLEY. It shall be as you wish.

BESSIE. Thanks. I need not detain you longer, Mr. Brownley (*Exit Brownley.*) I have decided. There now remains only to put that decision into action. (*Rings.*) I must confide in someone to aid me. Yes, Mr. Singleton can give me the assistance I shall need. (*Enter butler.*) How long to luncheon, James?

BUTLER. Luncheon will be served in half an hour.

BESSIE. Were there any letters for me?

BUTLER. I laid one on the table for you.

BESSIE. Call up Mr. Singleton, and say I wish to see him as soon as convenient. That is all. (*Exit butler.*) (*Bessie picks up letter and glances at address.*) It is from Paul, dear Paul. (*Kisses letter.*) I cannot read it now—oh, I cannot read it now. (*Puts letter in her bosom.*) That is Aunt Hannah's step. She must never know that I know her plans, that have blighted my life. (*Enter Miss Pennington.*)

MISS HANNAH. I have found you, my child. I wondered where you had hidden yourself. Why, how your hands tremble! What has alarmed you?

BESSIE. It is you who are unnecessarily alarmed. (*Puts arms about Miss Hannah.*) Would you miss me, if I were to leave you, Aunty?

MISS HANNAH. You know I would. Paul and you are the dearest ones to me on earth. Some day you will marry. Then I must give you up to your husband. (*Bessie shakes her head.*) Oh, the Prince charming will come, never fear.

BESSIE. I shall never marry.

MISS HANNAH. All girls say that, but there will come a time when you will meet your fate.

BESSIE. (*Aside.*) That time has already come, God help me!

MISS HANNAH. Bessie, let us talk of Paul. You know he is twenty-five now, wealthy, good-looking, accomplished, and attractive. A man who would make any woman happy. I believe in early marriages, and I have been thinking it is time he should marry.

BESSIE. Yes, Aunty, but I did not know that Paul had honored any girl with his love.

MISS HANNAH. We must help him. I have selected Ada Murray for his wife. You are wholly disinterested, and for that reason can form a better estimation of the girl than I can. My preference may lead me astray.

BESSIE. But why should I do that? That is ever the lover's privilege.

MISS HANNAH. Marriage is largely the creature of propinquity, often the mere outgrowth of association which ripens into love. Tell me, what is your opinion of Ada Murray?

BESSIE. I esteem her highly. A charming, pure girl. I have made no special study of her, certainly not in the character of Paul's wife.

MISS HANNAH. My child, you have unbounded influence with Paul. Before he left us, I noticed that he seemed to defer to your opinions in preference to all others. I understand the tendency of youth to be more frank with youth than with age. The relationship of guardian and ward, it seems, did not make you stand in awe of Paul.

BESSIE. Why, Aunty, I was not afraid of Paul, but he, of course, regards me merely as his ward.

MISS HANNAH. Yes, I presume so. But you will help me in forwarding this marriage?

BESSIE. I cannot promise that. But I will not stand in the way. Paul must choose for himself. There is nothing to deter him in wooing Ada. Some young men might be kept silent because of her wealth, but that could not apply to Paul.

MISS HANNAH. I thought you would gladly aid me in this matter. Later, possibly, you may see how desirable this marriage would be for the young couple. We will, however, talk of this again. (*Exit Miss Pennington.*)

BESSIE. Never again, if I can avoid it, Aunty. I cannot remain here now. Life would be daily torture for me. (*Enter Ada.*)

ADA. Bessie, what do you think? I actually believe that Miss Pennington has a marriage scheme between Paul Graham and your humble servant in the incubator and hopes to hatch it.

BESSIE. Yes, I believe such an alliance would be pleasing to her. Paul Graham is a man whom most women would be pleased to call husband.

ADA. I have not said he is not a desirable party. Did you ever hear him discuss me as the possible assistant head of his household?

BESSIE. Marriage, Ada, is the most momentous event in a woman's life.

ADA. I guess it is. It's a serious thing for a girl to get married. Don't you know, I saw in one of the comic papers where a grandmother made that remark to her granddaughter, and the pert miss replied that while it was true, it was much more serious for a girl not to get married at all.

BESSIE. I am not well, Ada, and you will pardon me if I ask you

not to discuss that subject to-day. But, I am sure that Paul Graham's wife could not be anything but a happy woman.

ADA. In Ireland, I heard a proverb, that "the far off hills are green." But my experience of the world, and I'm not as old as the hills, teaches me that in all journeys there is more or less jolting, let the road be never so good. I am annoying you with my flippancy.

BESSIE. I did not intend to be rude to you, Ada. Pardon me.

ADA. You are never rude, Bessie. Sometime, dear, I want to tell you something. I am so ashamed of myself, but I am so glad that it all happened as it did.

BESSIE. I am glad that you are happy, but don't tell me now.

ADA. You are too dreadfully doleful to enjoy it in your present humor, while I was never so happy in my life. Bessie, if I did not know better, I would think you were hopelessly in love. Good-bye, till —well until I see you again. (*Exit.*)

BESSIE. To all of this household, save me, the future holds forth some promise. I cannot continue here. I would go mad. There is no one to whom I can tell my troubles, while I must hide my torment with a soulless smile. (*Enter butler.*)

BUTLER. Luncheon is served, Miss Harrington, and Mr. Singleton awaits your pleasure in the library.

BESSIE. Say to Miss Pennington I will not come to luncheon. I think if I abstain from food for a little while I shall feel better. You will, however, send Mr. Singleton to me here. (*Exit butler.*) I must make my preparations quietly, so as not to arouse the suspicions of anyone, for every obstacle would be interposed to prevent me carrying out my purpose. (*Enter Singleton.*)

SINGLETON. You wish to see me, Miss Harrington?

BESSIE. Yes, but what I say to you must be under the seal of secrecy. Will you promise me, Mr. Singleton, not to disclose what I am about to tell you?

SINGLETON. I shall not abuse your confidence, Miss Harrington. If I can serve you in any way, command me.

BESSIE. Something has occurred which renders my continuance here impossible. Do not mistake my meaning. I have never known aught but considerate kindness ever since I have been an inmate of my guardian's home. Nor has an unkind word been spoken to or of me by anyone here. For reasons which I do not care to disclose, I have concluded to go to Manila, where I will enroll myself as a nurse in the military hospital there. This has been in contemplation for several months, and I have been under instructions to that end nearly the whole of that period. To-day, I finally decided to carry out that purpose. I ask you to help me in arranging for the voyage; to see to my luggage; and to instruct me as to the disposition of the funds I shall take, so as to avoid the possibility of theft. You understand how that is done. My trunks will be packed at one of the large stores, and will be taken from there direct to the vessel. Will you do this for me? I may have to obtain a passport, and you understand how that document is procured. I will assume all responsibility. Of course, I expect to remunerate you for your trouble.

SINGLETON. But will not Captain Graham object to this course?

BESSIE. I shall write a letter which will be mailed by the pilot, stating what I propose to do. When I reach Manila, I will notify Captain Graham of what I have done. Secure my ticket in the name of Miss Harrington, so that in the list of passengers published in the newspapers, it will pass without comment. Will you do what I ask, Mr. Singleton?

SINGLETON. I will.

BESSIE. I will communicate further with you to-morrow. I will not detain you longer now, Mr. Singleton. You have been exceedingly kind to me. I will not forget it.

SINGLETON. What you wish, I will do. Good-morning, Miss Harrington. (*Walks up stage.*) I believe the girl is in love with Captain Graham, and seeks this means to be near him. (*Exit.*)

BESSIE. Paul gave me a drawer in this desk for my own use. (*Unlocking drawer and looking over several articles.*) There is nothing that I cannot leave here, even if I should never enter this house again. Nothing that I care for. (*Picks up bundle, unwraps it, and discloses a doll...Weeps.*) Dolly, Paul bought you for me when he imagined that I was a mere child. It was the day I sought my guardian's care and the shelter of his home. I have kept you, Dolly, sacred from all eyes save mine, since that day when I first met Paul, and (*kisses doll*) I will keep you as long as I live. Inanimate, Dolly, yet you speak to me of him, and of a sweet dream that came into my lonely life, which now I know never can be other than a dream. Dolly, save Heaven and you, I have no one before whom I can lay my sorrows. Dolly, I did not know how dear Paul was to me until to-day when I overheard Ada Murray ask Mr. Brownley to pledge his aid to Aunt Hannah's scheme to bring about a marriage between Paul and Ada. Ada loves him, Dolly. I heard her tell Mr. Brownley that he knew how much she loved Paul. To no one but you, Dolly, can I ever tell how much I love Paul, or how much I have missed Paul. For a year, I have fondled you and told you my secrets. I could tell no one else. But I did not know until this morning that he was all the world to me. I have missed him, but I looked forward to his return to me. Now I know that I shall go through life forever missing him. I was a school girl when he gave you to me, Dolly; now I am a wretched woman, for I have no hope. Paul never told me that he loved me, Dolly, yet when he went away, mine was the last hand he grasped, and mine the last lips that knew his kiss. He was the only man I can remember, except dear Dad, that ever kissed me. He will never know how much that kiss was to me. He will never know how much I love him. (*Kisses the doll passionately.*) He shall never know that—that my heart is broken. (*Falls on her knees, hugging the doll, and weeping passionately as curtain slowly descends.*)

ACT III.

[SCENE.—*Handsome apartments in Manila. Large window with double sash opening to floor on right of stage. Double door at back and single door on left of stage. Sergeant Gray, in Khaki uniform assorting mail at table.*]

GRAY. The boys of Company G will be glad when they hear Captain Graham is well on the road to recovery. Dr. Wright must think his patient convalescent when he orders him to occupy this apartment in the daytime, as a sitting room. The Captain had a close call. That swamp fever, in addition to his wounds, nearly finished him. Poor fellow, he will be permanently disabled. It seems like infernal rot to call a wealthy gentleman, such as the Captain is, a poor fellow. He likes the service, and a braver man never went into action. It will go hard with him to be retired. (*Enter Dr. Wright. Gray salutes.*)

WRIGHT. Sergeant, I expected to find Captain Graham here.

GRAY. He will be, presently, sir.

WRIGHT. Who is assisting him to this room?

GRAY. No one, save Miss Harrington. She—

WRIGHT. That girl alone is not strong enough. It is absurd. She should have help.

GRAY. It was her request that no one should aid her. It was made in such a way that we could not refuse to gratify her.

WRIGHT. But she will wear herself out. The strain upon her has been very severe. When Graham was delirious for four days, she never left his room, and never slept a half hour during all that time. Her gentle nursing, not my medical skill, brought him through that crisis.

GRAY. She is his ward, I hear, Doctor, but she cares for him more than is usual for a ward to care for a guardian.

WRIGHT. Sergeant, what causes you to think that?

GRAY. You remember when the crisis was reached, for several hours you could not decide the probable termination of the disease?

WRIGHT. Yes, I was in grave doubt; but what has that to do with the girl's love for the Captain?

GRAY. Once during that uncertainty you shook your head ominously. She was watching your every movement, and when you did that, I never saw a face that expressed such abject despair as did Miss Harrington's then.

WRIGHT. Her weakness, consequent on her long vigil, might account for that.

GRAY. Yes, but it would not explain, when you were absent and I was in the adjoining room for a moment, why the girl should kneel at his bedside and cry "If you die, Paul, take me with you. Don't leave me, Paul." She does not know that she ever uttered those words. They were wrung from her in her agony. You are the only person, Doctor, to whom I have ever told that incident.

WRIGHT. Ump! Sergeant, what made you enlist. Was it patriotism alone?

GRAY. In a measure, patriotism.

WRIGHT. I have seen much of you recently, Gray. You are an educated man.

GRAY. Yes. Business reverses and a heartless girl had no little to do with my entering the army. I think it was because I had known to my sorrow a woman so different from Miss Harrington, that her devotion to Captain Graham attracted my attention more than it otherwise would have done.

WRIGHT. Graham is not married. All I have to say is that if he doesn't marry his ward, that is if she will have him, he's an ass.

GRAY. You are emphatic, Doctor.

WRIGHT. I am occasionally. I am a rough old bachelor. I'm only an army surgeon—they never have any money—but if I can do you a favor, I will be glad to do it. There is something about you that pleases me. By the way, the Hong Kong steamer got in two hours ago. If you are going to quarters shortly, should there be any mail for me, will you bring it here?

GRAY. Gladly, Doctor. Will you remain here until the Captain comes? If so, I will go now? (*Wright nods...Exit Gray.*)

WRIGHT. That man has been hit hard. That blow drove him into the service. (*Enter servant.*)

SERVANT. Two ladies and a gentleman wish to see Captain Graham.

WRIGHT. Did you learn their names?

SERVANT. The old lady says she is Captain Graham's aunt. She

gave me her card, sir. (*Gives it to Doctor.*) They were passengers on the Hong Kong steamer.

WRIGHT. Miss Pennington. That's the lady who wanted news of Captain Graham cabled to her, regardless of expense. I'm told she paid more than five hundred dollars for the message I sent. Of course, she must see the Captain, but it would be best for me to prepare him for her visit. Tell her I will advise when he is ready for the interview. (*Exit servant.*)

WRIGHT. Oh, here you are! (*Captain Graham enters from door on right, walking feebly, supported by Bessie. Wright supports him also and talks as they walk slowly to large chair near window.*) Miss Harrington, thanks to you, we will soon have the Captain strong enough to bear the trip to San Francisco. A sea voyage will do much in building him up, and you too, my dear young lady. (*Assists Graham into chair, while Bessie arranges the pillows.*)

GRAHAM. That time seems very remote. I gain strength so slowly. I ought not to complain. Bessie never does, although I fear I am too exacting and she is overtaxed.

BESSIE. Paul, you mustn't say that. You are the most tractable of patients. You must hurry and get stronger, so that you can soon return to New York. Aunt Hannah and Ada will be the happiest of women when you are homeward bound.

GRAHAM. Aunt Hannah will be, I know; but I cannot say as much about Ada.

BESSIE. I can, Paul. I know what you are to her.

GRAHAM. (*Smiling.*) Doctor, this young lady is my ward. But you see she has her own opinion and knows ever so much more than her guardian does.

WRIGHT. I can see as far into a millstone as others, I fancy. Now Captain, I have a surprise for you. You must be perfectly calm. You have some visitors waiting now to see you.

GRAHAM. Let them defer it. Bessie has promised to read to me, and I enjoy her reading so much. Her voice soothes me. That is true. (*Takes Bessie's hand.*) I do not say that merely in empty compliment.

WRIGHT. You must see these parties, Captain. They have journeyed half round the world to visit you.

GRAHAM. You must mean that Aunt Hannah is here. Dear old lady, Bessie knows she loves me with all her heart.

BESSIE. Others love you, too, Paul. In that Aunt Hannah is not alone.

WRIGHT. There is a young lady and gentleman with Miss Pennington.

GRAHAM. I cannot guess who they can be. I would not be surprised if Brownley had come with Aunty. But who the woman is, I cannot imagine.

BESSIE. (*Hesitating.*) I believe it is Ada. Ada Murray, Paul.

WRIGHT. Miss Harrington, I was apprehensive lest you were not strong enough to bring Captain Graham here without assistance. I was right.

BESSIE. No, you were not. I am only a little excited by this unexpected visit. Paul, shall I go welcome Aunty and the others? Shan't I bring them here immediately?

GRAHAM. Yes. I am glad they have come, although, Bessie, I cannot but regret that our readings will be interrupted.

BESSIE. But Ada has come, Paul. She reads so much better than

I. She can sit with you while Aunty and I will have many a quiet gossip to ourselves.

GRAHAM. I never heard her read. If you do not find the task irksome, I would much prefer that you should read to me. Then, your arrangement does not take the young gentleman into consideration.

WRIGHT. Possibly he is to fall to my lot. (*Exit Bessie.*) Captain, that girl may at any moment break down. The trouble, I imagine, is more mental than physical. Deal with her with the most considerate gentleness and tenderness. She certainly deserves that from you.

GRAHAM. I don't know what you are driving at. I have always been kind to and considerate of my ward. Damn it, Doctor, I often wish that she was not my ward. I believe I am jealous of every man who pays her more than ordinary attention.

WRIGHT. I have learned that you and she are not kin. What is to prevent you from marrying your ward?

GRAHAM. Do you think—

WRIGHT. I think if those Filipino bullets haven't knocked all the common sense you ever had out of your system, you'll ask her before many hours have passed to be your wife. I had best go meet your visitors. They may want to see me before they do you. (*Exit.*)

GRAHAM. Your last prescription, Doctor, is the best you have ever given me. While he was speaking, in a flood of joy, the truth came to me that I loved Bessie ever since the day she came to demand my actual protection as her guardian. Bessie Graham, Bessie Graham—If I have my way, she shall so write her name before another fortnight has elapsed. (*Enter Wright, Bessie, Miss Pennington, Ada, and Brownley. Miss Pennington crosses to Graham, kisses and pets him.*)

MISS HANNAH. I am so glad to see you, Paul dear. I thought our journey would never come to an end, I was so anxious to be with you.

GRAHAM. And I need not tell you how pleased I am to have you here, on this, the first day I have been permitted to leave my room. Aunty, you have Bessie to thank that I am here to welcome you. I owe my life to her careful nursing.

MISS HANNAH. Yet, Paul, it is wicked in me, but I was dreadfully angry when I learned that Bessie had left, without apprising any of us of her intention to come to Manila.

GRAHAM. You did not know she was coming?

MISS HANAH. No. The first intimation we had was her letter mailed by the pilot. But, Paul, I thank God now that she did come. Doctor Wright told me that had it not been for her unselfish care you would not be here to welcome us to-day.

BESSIE. Aunty, you must not accept that as the unalloyed fact. Both the Doctor and Paul overestimate my services. But Aunty, have you not forgotten that Ada is here?

MISS HANNAH. I am not wholly responsible for my actions. Paul, here is Ada. (*They shake hands.*) Mrs. Murray was, with difficulty, persuaded to let Ada accompany us, and now she is here, she will be delighted to relieve Bessie in the task of nursing you back to health. The Doctor says your ward sadly needs rest.

ADA. Captain Graham, I will be pleased to aid Bessie, but she must not transfer to me the whole responsibility. Then we have Mr. Brownley with us. You know that he's just the handiest sort of a man to have about. Just think what he had to undergo, with two women in charge—we wouldn't be bothered with our maids—and he never whimpered. At least, if he did, we never heard about it. Why,

when I'm seasick, I'm just a circus, and I was dreadfully sick nearly half the time we were at sea.

GRAHAM. You were in excellent charge, Miss Murray. *(Extends his hand to Brownley.)* Jim, I am exceedingly pleased that you came, particularly as you are so well recommended.

BROWNLEY. The ladies largely overpraise the slight service I rendered them.

WRIGHT. Pardon me, but this is the Captain's first day outside of his room in which he has been confined for nine weeks. You must let him rest now. This meeting, of course, has excited him.

ADA. Paul—I got in the way of calling you by your Christian name in chatting with Miss Pennington about you—I'm just dying to talk to you all by myself. I promise not to violate any of the laws promulgated by his majesty, the Doctor. Can't I sit by you presently? I have so much to tell you?

GRAHAM. Certainly. I will be pleased, Miss Murray, if you wish it.

ADA. I do. That's so nice of you. *(Walks to Brownley, speaks to him aside, while Miss Pennigton talks to Graham, petting his hand. Bessie and Doctor seem to converse.)* Oh, Jimmy, I'm going the pace. Just because we've decided not to announce our engagement until a short time before the sacrifice, I find myself in no end of trouble. I no more hesitate now in making a false statement than if I were a gas meter. Jim, remember how I shammed seasickness only that you could have a pretext to be with me most of the time we were on shipboard. I want to, I must, talk to Paul about Bessie. I told you once I didn't believe she was in love with him, but I was wrong.

BROWNLEY. *(Aside.)* Ada, would it not be best to announce our engagement? Miss Pennington still hopes to marry you to Paul.

ADA. *(Aside.)* Jimmy, you want a guardian. I think it must have been your innocence that first attracted me. Why, I've a dozen cousins who would much prefer to attend my funeral than my wedding. If our engagement is known, they will make mother's life wretched in the endeavor to estrange us. They will swear, if necessary, that you are seeking me only for my money, and what will come to me at mother's death. I couldn't, you know, tell mother that I proposed to you. No. Our announcement will be the invitation to the ceremony.

WRIGHT. You young people *(to Ada and Brownley)* seem to be engaged in an animated discussion.

ADA. I should think so. It relates to some business of importance. Isn't that so, Mr. Brownley?

BROWNLEY. Exceedingly important, and Miss Murray is right, as she usually is.

WRIGHT. This house is one of the largest in Manila. Of course, you will be welcome here. Let me show the apartments that you can make your choice.

BESSIE. I will show the rooms, Doctor.

WRIGHT. I prefer you should remain with Captain Graham. Miss Pennington, permit me to escort you. Mr. Brownley and Miss Murray will follow us. *(Exit.)*

GRAHAM. Bessie.

BESSIE. Yes, Paul.

GRAHAM. Come nearer to me. In hardly more than two years you will cease to be my ward. I was not much of a guardian to you at first. I may never strictly have been your guardian. But I never deliberately neglected you. Let me make amends. Won't you let me

protect and guard you always? I was made your guardian without your consent, but I now ask your consent to be my wife.

BESSIE. Paul, you don't know what you ask. You don't know what you ask.

GRAHAM. Yes, but I do. I love you, Bessie. We are not kin. This guardianship does not preclude marriage between us. I ask you to marry me, Bessie, because I love you, and because I believe I could make you a happy wife.

BESSIE. Paul, you are still weak from your long sickness, and—

GRAHAM. Would pay your unselfish tenderness and faithful attention by an offer of marriage. I had hoped you held me in higher esteem than that.

BESSIE. Paul, I do not mean anything unkind, but I cannot accept your offer. There are others who must be considered. *(Paul shakes head.)* Yes. No mother could have loved you more than Aunt Hannah does, and I know it would grieve her if she knew of this. Her dearest wish is that you shall marry Ada.

GRAHAM. But why should Aunt Hannah stand between me and happiness? Besides, Ada Murrray is nothing to me.

BESSIE. But you are all the world to her. *(Paul shakes head.)* Yes you are, Paul. I heard her confess that with her own lips. I heard her declare how much she loved you. She does not know I overheard her confession. No, Paul, it would ruin two women's lives if I consented to your wish. I am greatly honored in the proposal you have made me, but my conscience tells me that I would do wrong if I answered you otherwise than I have done.

GRAHAM. Then you do not love me, Bessie? That alone can justify your act? I had hoped otherwise.

BESSIE. Paul, I would do anything for you that would be honorable in me to do. But I cannot consent to be your wife. Aunt Hannah—

GRAHAM. What right has Aunt Hannah to be considered in this?

BESSIE. Paul, won't you understand? Ada Murray loves you. She would not have made this long journey if she had not. Aunt Hannah brought her in the hope that the girl she wished to be your wife might hear from your lips the words you have unguardedly spoken to me. You have been Aunt Hannah's first thought ever since you were a tiny infant, and your happiness is the first thought of her heart even now.

GRAHAM. But how about Paul Graham? Is he not to be considered at all?

BESSIE. Yes, and because I do consider him, I ask you, Paul, if ever I have been kind to you, that you in turn will be kind to me. Promise me that you will never mention this subject to me again.

GRAHAM. Never again, Bessie. I was mistaken. But as I have promised you that, you must in turn promise me, that until you become of legal age, you will remain my ward, and make your guardian's house your home. Should I marry, then the promise is no longer valid. I promised your dying father I would protect you until the law discharged me of your guardianship, and I do not wish to break my pledge to the dead.

BESSIE. I hear them returning, Paul. Tell me before I leave you that you are not angry with me. I could not bear that. It is for your best interest. *(Extends hand.)* We shall remain as we were, before—

GRAHAM. Before I asked you to be my wife? It is a woman's privilege to accept or reject a suitor. You have rejected me, but I

am still your guardian. You will never know any difference in that relationship from what it was less than [illegible] ago.

BESSIE. *(Kissing Paul on forehead.)* You have never been unkind to me, Paul. I love you—I love you, as a grateful ward should love an indulgent guardian. *(Exit.)*

GRAHAM. *(Night comes on, and the daylight fades from the great window.)* I am a disabled man, indeed. Time will make me accustomed to my physical mishap, but this last wound will never heal. I ought to have known that a cripple has no right to ask a woman like Bessie to share his lot. The light has gone out of my life as the sun has gone out of these skies. *(Enter Ada.)*

ADA. I am not yet accustomed to these tropical changes, where day so quickly yields place to darkness, and where twilight is unknown. Paul, you are still here? I heard Bessie enter her room. May I talk to you now? I want to do that when Bessie is not likely to interrrupt our conversation.

GRAHAM. If you wish it so.

ADA. Of course I wish it. I am going to confide to you a secret that no one knows but Jim and I.

GRAHAM. Who is Jim?

ADA. I should have said Mr. Brownley. Now, Paul, you mustn't tell a soul, but Mr. Brownley and I are engaged to be married. I think you ought to know, because your Aunt, Miss Pennington, has an absurd scheme to marry me to you.

GRAHAM. I know.

ADA. Who could have told you? It wasn't Jim, was it?

GRAHAM. No. I must congratulate Jim and you. Jim is a good fellow, and will make you a happy wife. But I never heard he was paying attention to you.

ADA. He hasn't paid attention to any other girl, has he, Paul?

GRAHAM. You have no cause to be alarmed. I never heard that he was attentive to any woman beyond what is required from every gentleman to a lady in whose company he may chance to be for the time being.

ADA. Well, Jim was in love with me—I want you to understand this affair fully—but he was afraid of my money, and he never would have proposed to me. I gave him no end of chances, for I loved Jim, but he was blind, and would not see. So one day, well—I just proposed to him. That's the truth, and I'm not a bit sorry that I did.

GRAHAM. Then why did you say to Jim that he knew how much you loved me, Paul Graham?

ADA. How did you hear that? I did say it, but it was merely a jest. I said that because I had just told Jim that I loved him. What I said about you was because your Aunt Hannah had only just before asked Jim to help her in marrying me to you. Jim asked me at that time if I thought Bessie was in love with you. I said no then, but I know better now. I wanted to tell you, Paul, that Bessie is breaking her heart for you.

GRAHAM. You are the second person to-day, Ada—I must call you Ada—who has told me that Bessie loves me. But both were mistaken.

ADA. No, we are not.

GRAHAM. I proposed to Bessie not ten minutes ago, and she refused me.

ADA. Why, that cannot be. I don't comprehend it. She loves you—I know she loves you. If ever woman loved a man, she loves you. I must go to her at once and set this matter right. Ask her again,

Paul. She was worn out and overwrought. She may not have understood what you asked her.

GRAHAM. She did, and I promised her never to broach the subject to her again. Knowing that, I earnestly request you not to mention one word to her of this matter.

ADA. My engagement was not to be announced to anyone until just before the wedding, but if it will bring Bessie and you nearer by its announcement, I will give it publicity to night, if I must murder all father's nephews and nieces. They want the money father left to mother and me, which, by father's will, will go to them should I never marry.

GRAHAM. You are a woman whose energy carries her purpose to accomplishment.

not

ADA. Yet I am happy. I fancy that in some way I have made you and Bessie miserable. Tell me, Paul, you do love Bessie?

GRAHAM. Yes, but now it is a hopeless love. Ada, call Doctor Wright, I will go to my room.

ADA. Bessie would not call assistance. Nor will I. (*Assists Paul to rise. He places his hand on her shoulder and walks across stage.*) I'm a woman with a mission now. Look there (*Points to large window*) the moonlight is already streaming into this apartment. Love will light up your heart sometime as the moon illuminates this room. (*Exit. Bessie enters at centre door, carrying doll in her arms.*)

BESSIE. I do not know why this doll allays my anguish, why, when my heart is heavy and the future holds no promise for me, I turn to this doll for sympathy. It was Paul's first gift to me. It cannot be that which makes it dear to me. No, it is because I have been always alone, and have never spoken my sorrows or my joys to anyone. Paul loves me. I saw it to-night in his pleading eyes, when I turned from him and withdrew my hand from his grasp. I could not touch his hand and refuse his love. If he were to ask me now, I could not—I could not deny him again. (*Seats herself in Paul's chair, with moonlight streaming upon her. Holding the doll to her breast, her right hand falls over arm of chair. She muses in deep thought. Native enters at center door, approaches her chair stealthily, gazes at her, and assuming that she is sleeping, he kneels beside chair and attempts to remove gently a ring from her finger of her right hand. Her eyes open; she screams...He rises and strikes at her with knife. Bessie falls back in chair. Sergeant Gray enters running. Native drops knife, attempts to escape at window, but is shot by Gray. People of houshold run in. Paul staggers across stage to Bessie's chair and sinks on his knees.*)

day.

WRIGHT. She has merely fainted. Thank God, the doll received the knife thrust in its body, and saved her life. (*Curtain falls.*)

ACT IV.

[*Same scene as Acts I and II. Ada and Miss Pennington discovered.*]

MISS HANNAH. Ada, you must exert your influence with Paul. Persuade him to adandon this journey he has in view. It will consume two years at least.

ADA. You must have noticed that Paul has greatly changed since his return from Manila. I question if I have the influence with him that you credit me with.

MISS HANNAH. Occasionally I fancy some bitterness has come into Paul's life of which we are ignorant; a greater disappointment than the

adandonment of his military career. He is ever gentle, yet I feel that he is not so near me in sympathy as he was only a year ago.

ADA. But Paul loves you. Only yesterday he said his only regret in leaving New York was his separation from you.

MISS HANNAH. Ere this, I had hoped Paul and you would be man and wife. Then your wishes would have been consulted as to the journey.

ADA. Paul never thought seriously of me as his wife.

MISS HANNAH. I never doubted that our visit to Manila would have brought about your engagement.

ADA. Miss Pennington, have you never thought that Paul may have given his heart to another woman?

MISS HANNAH. No. I once suggested that to Bessie, but she turned the conversation, and I am sure she regarded my suggestion as of little moment. Bessie has odd notions. Fancy her keeping that horrid doll which saved her life in Manila. I should imagine she would prefer to have no memorial of that dreadful night.

ADA. Paul gave her that doll.

MISS HANNAH. Yes, but it was when he thought of her only as a little girl.

ADA. Yet she has kept that doll ever since. Why?

MISS HANNAH. A strange fancy; a morbid taste almost, that cherishes such a memorial. Why, the doll's body is torn with the murderous knife thrust.

ADA. Possibly there are other associations connected with the doll save those of Manila.

MISS HANNAH. What? That Bessie loves Paul with a stronger feeling than that of ward for her guardian? You are wrong. They, I regret to see, avoid each other. Paul should renounce that trust now, for she will not come of age for nearly two years. (*Enters butler with letters. Hands them to Miss Pennington. Exit butler.*)

MISS HANNAH. (*Looking over letters.*) These are for Paul. This is Bessie's. This is mine. (*Opens it.*) Why; Ada, you and Mr. Brownley to be married? I never was so astonished in my life.

ADA. Mr. Brownley and I were engaged before we went to Manila.

MISS HANNAH. And you never told me!

ADA. I told no one except Captain Graham. I did not wish that our engagement should be made public. That, I now believe, was a mistake. Possibly two lives might have been happier than they are now, had we announced it.

MISS HANNAH. I have held you in high esteem, Ada, and wished you were Paul's wife, but if you enter into this loveless marriage, I shall always thank Heaven that my wish was frustrated.

ADA. (*Laughing.*) You have awfully muddled my meaning. Mr. Brownley just believes that there never was a girl to compare with me, and I know he is the best man in the world.

MISS HANNAH. Then what am I to understand of those two lives that might have been happier than they are now? It is all a tangle to me.

ADA. I would not offend you, Miss Pennington, but I cannot refrain from telling you that if you had not attempted to arrange a certain marriage, Paul and Bessie would not be as miserable as they are to-day.

MISS HANNAH. That is outrageous! Why, I

ADA. I did not intend to be so cruelly plain, but I have pondered over this affair until it has made me cross. It seems to me that you, and you alone, can right the wrong that has been done. I believe—

MISS HANNAH. Paul and Bessie love each other?

ADA. Yes. Paul Graham acknowledged his love for Bessie to me.

MISS HANNAH. And Bessie?

ADA. Is uncommunicative, but I will stake everything I have in the world that she loves Paul with all her heart. Have you at any time spoken to her about my marriage to Paul?

MISS HANNAH. I don't remember. (*Hesitates.*) I did ask her to use her influence with Paul to aid that marriage.

ADA. She promised that she would?

MISS HANNAH. No, she refused.

ADA. Is that all? A blank refusal?

MISS HANNAH. She said she would not stand in the way of the marriage.

ADA. She never hinted of this to me. I found her constantly offering excuses to leave Paul and me together. On the steamer, on our return, she several times refused Paul's and my assistance. The girl was then so feeble, for she was still weak from her serious illness at Manila, that it was with difficulty she could walk unaided. I felt at the time her purpose was to throw us together.

MISS HANNAH. I must know the whole truth, no matter how hard that may be for me. Have I stood between Paul and his happiness? I would not willingly do that. I am sure you will believe me, I would not do that.

ADA. You acted with but one thought, his happiness.

MISS HANNAH. I must go to him at once. He must ask Bessie to be his wife. Tell me, can Paul be exiling himself because of my intermeddling? I may tell him, may I not, what he told you about Bessie? I must bring them together. It must be made all right.

ADA. Listen, Miss Pennington, Paul proposed to Bessie the afternoon we reached Manila. She refused him. Paul told me that.

MISS HANNAH. But he will ask her again? He can tell her how my mistake was responsible for their unhappiness.

ADA. That would not help matters. Bessie made Paul promise that he would never again ask her to be his wife. He will, I am sure, never break his pledge.

MISS HANNAH. Why did Bessie, if she loved him, refuse him?

ADA. I cannot understand. (*Holds up hands in astonishment.*) Yes, I do now. When Mr. Brownley and I became engaged—it occurred in this room—he told me you had asked him to aid you in bringing about my marriage to Paul. Bessie came in just as I said to him "You know how much I love Paul Graham." She accepted that statement of mine as the literal truth. She believed that I loved Paul.

MISS HANNAH. Well, go on.

ADA. I know she heard, because Paul repeated the words to me at Manila, and Bessie must have told him. I have no right to call you to judgment, when it is my own words that have put Paul and Bessie asunder.

MISS HANNAH. What can we do? I will abase myself in the dust, if need be, to make this right.

ADA. Bessie could correct this hateful blunder. She is the only one who can.

MISS HANNAH. I will see her immediately. But what must she do?

ADA. Let us reflect before we act. I see but one hope. We can appeal to Bessie's unselfish love for Paul. Paul's good must alone be urged for the girl has already sacrificed her heart in her blind worship

of him, and she may be induced to act as we wish, if demanded for Paul's sake. Here she comes now. (*Enter Bessie.*)

BESSIE. (*Sternly.*) Miss Murray, invitations have been issued for your marriage to Mr. Brownley. Have I heard aright?

ADA. Yes. Here—(*picks up letter and hands to Bessie*)—is one addressed to you.

BESSIE. I looked upon you as an exceptionally strong character. I admired you for your fixedness of purpose. I read, I thought, beneath the surface of your ordinary address, and in you I saw one of the women whose price is above rubies. Hardly eight months ago, in this room, I heard you declare to this man—(*holds out invitation*)—with whom this asserts you are soon to wed, that he, Mr. Brownley, knew how much you loved Paul Graham.

MISS HANNAH. It was all a mistake, Bessie, indeed it was all a mistake.

BESSIE. Pardon me, Aunty, my questions are addressed to Miss Murray.

ADA. I said that. But a moment before I had told Mr. Brownley I loved him. More than that, I proposed to Mr. Brownley. I tell you, Bessie Harrington, this that you may comprehend that I love Mr Brownley so wholly that I ignored the time honored custom which keep women silent, and offered myself in marriage to him.

BESSIE. Miss Murray, you must indeed love this man.

ADA. Yes, I do. I love him so much that there is no place in my heart for Paul Graham. That was the meaning of what I said. I did not imagine my words could be given other signification. I told Paul what I had said when I told him of my engagement to Mr. Brownley.

MISS HANNAH. You told Paul of your engagement? When?

ADA. In Manila, the same night the woman he loved and still loves rejected him. He was still weak from wounds he had received in battle, and, noble fellow, he pled that disability in extenuation, in justification, of her refusal to be his wife.

BESSIE. You dare say that to me? You, who have made my life desolate? You, who now criticizes my acts, and yet kept your lips sealed as to your engagement, as though that were something of which you should be ashamed? You admitted Paul Graham to your confidence. Why was I not told of this? I had the right to know.

ADA. You refused my confidence. The day of my engagement I strove to tell you of it, but you declined to hear me. Since then, you have studiously avoided opportunity for me to tell you that which I desired you, above all others, to know.

BESSIE. I thought you wished to tell me of your love for Paul. I could not trust myself to listen to that confession.

ADA. You are not without fault. Paul Graham, upon whom the blow falls heaviest, who is absolutely innocent of all deceit, is being driven into exile through our acts.

BESSIE. He must not go.

ADA. What will you do? You alone can bid him stay.

BESSIE. How? What can I do?

ADA. Go to him. Confess your love. You are as brave—a braver woman than I. Offer yourself to him as I did to Mr Brownley. Tell him the truth—for it is the truth—that you will die, if he leaves you. In no other way can you break the silence you imposed upon Paul Graham at Manila.

BESSIE. I cannot—I cannot degrade myself in his eyes. He would despise me if I stooped to that. I still command his respect. In mercy let me retain that.

ADA. I am mistaken. You do not love Paul Graham?

BESSIE. So much so that I would willingly lay down my life if in so doing I could purchase peace and happiness for him. I have never known a selfish thought associated with Paul. Life has been empty for me for many months, for I believed you loved Paul, and that you would be his wife. For his sake, I would brave much, but I cannot deliberately earn his contempt.

ADA. (*Aside to Miss Hannah.*) She will do what we suggest for Paul's sake. That is the only motive that will move her to our wishes.

MISS HANNAH. Bessie, I did both you and Paul wrong, but it was done in ignorance—not intention. I ask nothing for myself, but I ask everything for Paul. On my soul, I am guiltless of deliberate wrong to you both.

BESSIE. You must not accuse yourself. I have never accused you.

MISS HANNAH. But I am driving Paul away. I am powerless to hold him from his purpose. I have tried to do that and have failed.

BESSIE. Then I will fail also.

MISS HANNAH. I do not ask you to humble yourself. Only go to Paul and open your heart to him. For Paul's sake, you must do that.

BESSIE. I cannot. I feel I have not that influence you think I have with him. Aunty, Paul would not listen to me now. Let me think.

ADA. Someone is coming. (*Enter Paul, who walks with a slight limp, and Brownley.*)

PAUL. The ladies have possession of the den. Brownley, we will defer the examination of the map and documents for a time.

BROWNLEY. The legal papers I left at Drake's office. I will send for them. Some will need witnesses to your signature.

ADA. Mr. Brownley, I have a favor to ask from you. Captain, I'm going to run away with Jim. (*Paul laughs.*) Only for a few minutes. You'll not mind, will you?

PAUL. He must obey, at all events, now. Two weeks hence—well, let time settle that. At present, all await the pleasure of the bride-elect.

ADA. It is high time someone should make you obey and abandon that fool journey you are contemplating. (*Exit Brownley and Ada.*)

PAUL. (*Looking at letters.*) Soliciting subscription to all sorts of projects. Why, Aunty, here's a letter for you. A man's handwriting, and posted at San Francisco. You have not opened it. (*Hands it to Miss Hannah.*)

MISS HANNAH. I wonder who is writing me. (*Ada at entrance beckons energetically to Miss Hannah, who walks to door, contemplating envelope.*)

ADA. (*Aside to Miss Hannah.*) Come. Bessie and Paul will be alone. They will not notice our absence. (*Exit Ada and Hannah.*)

PAUL. (*Glancing around.*) Bessie, I wish to speak to you on business. Within two years you will attain legal age. I shall be absent then, but Mr Drake will account for and transfer your estate to you, in good dividend paying securities, which you will do well to retain, and make no change in the investments.

BESSIE. Paul, don't talk to me of that. I don't care anything about it. (*Rises and approaches him.*) Tell me, you are not going away for two years? Why, the separation will kill Aunty.

PAUL. Not kill her, Bessie, but Aunt will miss me.

BESSIE. Paul, you have never been cruel to me. Will Aunty be the only one who misses you? You do not think me so heartless as that?

PAUL. I did not intend to wound you, Bessie. You know I would not.

BESSIE. Yes, I know. You have always been considerate of me. But, Paul, why do you go? Have I anything to do with it? Why do you contemplate shutting yourself out from all those who love you and to whom you have always been so good?

PAUL. I think it best that I should go. (*Bessie sinks in chair and weeps.*) Bessie, I do not want to hurt you, but I think my duty demands that I should tell you that it is not likely I shall return even in five years. When I see New York again it is probable that you will be a happy wife. (*Bessie rises with gesture of denial.*) Do not be angry with me, I may never have another opportunity to speak of your future. Five years is a long time. You are an attractive woman, who will be sought in wedlock, and I—

BESSIE. (*Indignantly.*) A poor girl's path is so strewn with happiness that she may pick whatever pleases her fancy.

PAUL. You are not a poor girl.

BESSIE. Having money, I can command the market. Paul Graham, you are the last man who should urge me to buy a husband with my hateful fortune.

PAUL. I do not urge you to marry anyone. I mentioned only the probability of your marriage.

BESSIE. I was not a child when I became your ward. Are you weary of your duties as my guardian? Once for all, I will not marry at your dictation. I can seek a home elsewhere, if you desire it, but no arguments will force me into a marriage in which love has no part.

PAUL. I am not blind. I know you are no longer the happy girl who won our hearts when you came to claim your guardian's protection two years ago. A few days since I mentioned that change to Aunt Hannah, and she wondered if you were not in love.

BESSIE. Is that all she told you?

PAUL. In substance, yes. You must believe that my first wish is your happiness.

BESSIE. Then why do you not help me to secure that happiness?

PAUL. I have tried to do that always.

BESSIE. How? In exiling yourself from your home? Do you think I do not know that I am forcing you to seek happiness elsewhere?

PAUL. You are vexed with me. Now listen. I am a wealthy man. Charles Howard is an accomplished gentleman, whose character is irreproachable. He has, I know, but little means. Your personal fortune never, with my consent, shall be diverted from your own control, if I can prevent it. But for your sake, I will secure for Howard an interest in a well established lucrative business.

BESSIE. What then?

PAUL. That would give to Howard income sufficient to secure your happiness.

BESSIE. What am I to Charles Howard? What is he to me?

PAUL. Is he not the man you love? The man you would marry?

BESSIE. Charles Howard is nothing to me.

PAUL. Who is then, Bessie? Aunt Hannah believes that you are interested in Howard.

BESSIE. He is no more to me than any of the gentlemen who are frequent visitors here.

PAUL. Then you are not in love? You do not love any man enough to be his wife.

BESSIE. (*Hesitating.*) I—why do you ask me, Paul?

PAUL. I am your guardian. I understand then, that you do not love anyone? Then why are you unhappy?

BESSIE. I have not said I was unhappy?

PAUL. You may blind other people, but not me. Answer the question I asked you. Do you love any man enough to wish to be his wife?

BESSIE. God help me, I do! But I do not know how to win him, nor to let him know that he is everything to me.

PAUL. Tell me who he is. I will help you to win him, if I can.

BESSIE. Do you want to make me happy? Then renounce this preposterous exile. Is there no way I can influence you to do that?

PAUL. But—

BESSIE. Paul, if you must go, take me with you. Do not leave me. I am all alone in the world.

PAUL. I do not see how I can do that, Bessie. It would place us in a position in which we would be compelled constantly to explain our relationship of guardian and ward. Our ages too, Bessie, would constantly excite comment, and call forth sneers and doubts of the truth of that relationship. A woman's reputation is easily tarnished, and foul tattle holds firm lodgment in the memory of gossips. I do not see any way to accomplish your desire.

BESSIE. (*Approaching near to Paul.*) But I—I think I do, Paul.

PAUL. You must tell me. I cannot guess your plans.

BESSIE. I have no plan. But I might go. (*Hesitating.*) I could go, Paul, as—

PAUL. Yes, in what way? What character?

BESSIE. I could go as—as your wife, Paul. Indeed I mean it, Paul, if you will have me. You once asked me to be your wife. I loved you then, Paul. Oh, how I loved you, and it almost broke my heart when, thinking it to be my duty, I refused you. I believed that another woman loved you, and I know Aunt Hannah desired that you and that woman, who is good and true and worthy of you, Paul, should marry. I believed that you could not help loving her, and when you asked me to be your wife, I thought it was the promptings of gratitude that I had cared for you when you could not care for yourself. It was wicked of me to have such thoughts of you, but, Paul, I was jealous madly jealous, for Ada had come that very day, and in my hearing had asked to talk to you alone. I wanted often to talk to you alone, but, Paul, I dared not ask it.

PAUL. I love you, but—I am a cripple now. It is for life. There is no hope that I can ever overcome that mishap. Bessie, I have loved you, I do love you, and because I do love you, I cannot selfishly accept your sacrifice.

BESSIE. Paul, it is no sacrifice. Indeed, it is not, for I love you with all my heart. I have loved you from the time you gave me that doll, which has been my mascot. You were the only person, save Daddy, who thought enough of me to give me anything, and then you were so young, so nice, so different from what I expected to find you, that I couldn't help loving you, and, Paul, I will always love you as long as I shall live. Don't despise me or turn from me. I am pleading to you for my life's happiness. Won't you take me with you, Paul?

PAUL. My darling, you have brought again into my life the sunshine that came into this gloomy house two years ago, the day my ward claimed her guardian's protection, and accepted the doll he tendered her as a peace offering.

BESSIE. The doll that I have kept since, and will always keep, to my dying day. But you have not answered my question. Won't you take me with you, Paul?

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PAUL. Until death do us part, Bessie. (*She runs into his arms. He kisses her. She looks up into his face.*)

BESSIE. Was I unwomanly in confessing my love for you, Paul? I'm glad I did it, and I will make you glad all your life that I proposed to you.

PAUL. I did not refuse you as you refused me once upon a time.

BESSIE. I almost died when I did it, but I will not refuse you again.

PAUL. Well, to put that to the test, marry me in ten days. I will have the cards by to-morrow morning.

BESSIE. I could not get my trousseau ready in that time.

PAUL. Aunty can attend to that. It will give her occupation and no end of pleasure. Are you going to refuse me this request?

BESSIE. I don't know how I can get ready, but—I consent. Now, Paul, you will promise me to abandon this hateful journey?

PAUL. I will not give up our wedding journey, but you can arrange the itinerary of that trip. (*Enter Ada and Brownley.*)

ADA. Well, well. Is it all well?

PAUL. I have decided to renounce the charge of my ward, and—

ADA. I'd like to hammer some common sense into you two.

PAUL. Had you permitted me to finish my sentence, I intended to say will take charge of my wife instead.

ADA. I'm so glad. To avoid all blunders in the future, you ought to be married, say six weeks hence.

PAUL. Oh, no. We will be married in ten days. Wednesday week.

ADA. Why, that is the day before our wedding. I don't care, now that you two have come to the best of understandings. (*Enter Doctor Wright and Miss Hannah.*)

WRIGHT. (*Taking Paul and Bessie by hands.*) I am so glad to see you, and so glad to know you have come to the best of understandings. This little woman, when she left Manila, gave me three thousand dollars for Sergeant Gray. Well, his enlistment expiring, he became a buyer of hemp, and in a few months has become comparatively wealthy, for some other good soul sent him twenty-five thousand. I think Gray was dead in luck that night in Manila, when he attempted to save a little woman from an assassin's knife.

BROWNLEY. Singleton is in partnership with Gray. I wrote to him when we were in Manila that considerable money could be made in buying hemp there. Mis Harrington presented Singleton with three thousand dollars. It seems he had aided her in some way, and she chose to remember it. Gray and Singleton seem to have known each other at school. They will, at no distant day, be men of large influence and means in our new possessions.

PAUL. What about you, Doctor?

WRIGHT. I'm retired. Well, Paul, when I reached San Francisco, I wrote to Hannah, asking her to be my wife. I thought I hadn't anything but my pay when I wrote to her, but it seems that some stock I bought at low figures, more from charity than as an investment, has become enormously valuable. I made eighty thousand. I couldn't wait at San Francisco for an answer to my letter, so I came on here, and, you young scoundrel, I'm to be your uncle in a few weeks. (*All gather around Hannah and Wright to congratulate them.*)

PAUL. Aunty, was that the letter I gave you a half hour ago?

MISS HANNAH. Yes, Paul, but I didn't know it would make such a change for me. For, Paul, I have accepted the Doctor.

BESSIE. Paul, what enchantment rests upon this den of yours?

Here I first met you; here you gave me the doll that consoled me often in my misery and saved me from the assassin's knife. Here Mr. Brownley and Ada told their love.

ADA. Hardly accurate. Here Ada told her love.

BESSIE. Here Aunt Hannah received Doctor Wright's written declaration of his love, and—here—here—

ALL. Go on.

BESSIE. Here the Captain's ward offered to become the Captain's wife, and won happiness by her boldness. (*Curtain falls.*)

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